Interview with former Marine lieutenant Joseph R. Owen, Company B, First Battalion, Seventh Marines. Present at Chosin Reservoir Campaign. Conducted by Jan K. Herman, Historian, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Washington, DC, 15 August 2000.

Please tell me about the events leading up to your being wounded.

I was a regular officer of Marines and a 2nd lieutenant when the Korean War began. I was assigned to B-1-7. COL [Ray] Davis sent me over to Baker Company where I took over the 60mm mortars.

We formed up at Camp Pendleton. We were a very new rifle company and we actually had our combat training under fire. That's when we took our first casualties. I lost one man killed in my mortar section. Our casualties for 5 or 6 days amounted to about 30 people. But that gave our corpsmen a lot of experience too. We lost no corpsmen in that fight. When we made the trip from Inchon up to Wonsan, the famous "Operation Yo-Yo, we went aboard for 3 day and were out at sea for 2 weeks while the Navy cleared the harbor of mines.

I was on a Japanese LST, which the Navy had leased back from the Japanese for this operation. Our corpsman was the busiest guy on that ship because of dysentery and the sickness. He got one case of appendicitis and we had do a breeches buoy over to a hospital ship. That was Bill Davis. He was a helluva guy. He weighed about 120 pounds, a skinny little kid. Before the Korean War broke out he was in the diet kitchen at Annapolis. That was what his duty was. He could hardly pick up his gear. Did we love that kid. He was gutsy.

We got into heavy fighting up north at a place called Sudong. That's where we first ran into the Chinese. They hit us at night. We were half expecting them. We were on top of a hill. We took as many casualties that night as we had taken in the whole operation outside of Seoul. I think we carried 30 wounded people down. I was a junior officer in the company so the skipper always gave me such details. In the morning we took all our wounded and dead down to the aid station. That was the first time I'd seen an aid station that was crowded. I took a whole detail down with me along with about 20 wounded men and we had to get them in a line because there were so many wounded. That was my first exposure to an aid station.

We had one corpsman, our senior corpsman, who wasn't very good. He disappeared that night. It's funny. After that, nobody would pay any attention to him and he soon left the company. Then we ended up with [Edward] Toppel, [Raymond] Doktorski, and [William] Davis. Interestingly, [ ] Mickens was . . .

Mickens was the black corpsman.

Yes. The Corps at that time had just broken out of segregation and there was some stuff at the beginning. I remember a couple of the troops bitching that they weren't going let no nigger put their hands on them... and that kind of thing. We got rid of that stuff in a hurry. We didn't tolerate it and, after combat, Mickens was revered. I've got to say that all our corpsmen were fearless. They would do things ordinary people would not do.

This morning while we were driving in, you had some things to say about corpsmen.

Our corpsmen were a very special breed of people. When they become corpsmen they become fearless. Davis, Doktorski, Toppel, and Mickens--I never saw those guys falter. We had upmost confidence in them. They took care of some real tough cases--and multiple cases at one time. You'd get into a firefight and suddenly have five or six guys down at once. As Bill Davis said, he often had to do his own instant triages--make a decision just like that. Which guy is he going to take care of first and how much time he is going to spend with him? You'll never see any Marine who won't tell you that the greatest people in the world are his corpsmen.

I mentioned earlier that the docs had their sick bay alcohol. We found that in the cold the only way to keep water liquid would be to put some in your canteen, certainly not enough to get inebriated but just enough to keep the water liquid. One day the old man--our regimental commander--[Homer] Litzenberg--came down in the column and walked with the troops. He got up next to Bill Davis one day and said, "Are you carrying anything that might warm us up?" Bill Davis had his canteen generous with sick bay alcohol. The old man knew that if he saw a corpsman he knew where he could get a drink. So here's this kid who just 3 months before was working in the diet kitchen at Annapolis and now he's trudging along in his parka at 30 below zero and the old man is standing next to him asking, "Have you got anything there, corpsman?"

Davis then thought, "Should I possibly give him my good stuff?" Finally he gave the old man a snort, which was probably 50 percent alcohol. And the old man says, "As soon as you get back to the states, young man, you look me up. I owe you a drink."

In taking care of the wounded in the cold, the corpsmen were the only guys who took their gloves off. Do you know how they got their hands warm? They'd put them right into the guy. Bill Davis will tell you stories about practical field medicine.

We were like a reeinforced rifle platoon and by that time down to about 50 people. We lost all our corpsmen. We lost Mickens and Davis. We were on a company sized patrol on 27 November and the Chinese surrounded us. We were about 5 miles the battalion perimeter. We just circled the wagons and were waiting for them to come at us that night. We were running out of ammo. Mickens and Davis formed their own temporary aid station in the middle of our perimeter with the Chinese shooting in at us.

Mickens got it fairly early. They had him stretched out. Bill Davis was over trying to take care of him. One of my men directed a stretcher detail and he was going all over the place picking up bodies. They took them to where Davis was treating the wounded. We lost two platoon sergeants, and the skipper got hit through the mouth. Bill Davis was leading a walking wounded guy and was trying to get him over to where the stretchers were. As he did so he took a piece of shrapnel through the mouth and couldn't talk. He tried to keep working but after a while he couldn't and they put him down. I don't know whether anybody took care of the wounded after that.

Davis walked out; Mickens they carried out. I never saw him again and I've tried so hard to locate him. When we have our company reunions, everybody wants to know what ever happened to Mickens and could we ever get him with us again.

Davis tells a great story about the evacuation from Hagaru when they were taking the wounded out. CAPT [Eugene] Hering [Division Surgeon] would determine how bad you were. Bill Davis couldn't talk. He wanted to tell CAPT Hering to let him stay. This is the spirit of those guys.

Doktorski got hit the first time at Sudong-ni when we ran into the Chinese the first time. He was a character and still is. Toppel was the last of the corpsman left on that patrol where we got surrounded. So he was taking care of everybody including the other corpsmen. He got hit in

the leg either that day or that night, I'm not sure. We didn't have anybody else. He said he could walk around because his leg had gotten numb. Toppel, as a non-combatant, captured his own prisoners. I say non-combatant facetiously because our corpsmen, especially Toppel, who carried a carbine, and would get pissed off and go after the people who wounded our men.

Toppel stayed with us and was the only corpsman in the company. He went through the night march with us when we broke through to Fox Company. Fortunately, we didn't get any casualties until the next day. We had very few casualties on that operation.

Just before we got to Hagaru, the old man put us back on rear guard. That's the way it is with the rifle companies. You got the point when the outfit's moving out, then you got the rear guard. We set up a perimeter outside of Hagaru. That's so the rest of the column could get through. We fought off the Chinese a couple of times that night. The next morning we looked down the road toward Hagaru-ri and there was a column of smartly dressed and smartly stepping guys wearing white parkas. We didn't know who they were but they looked like they were on our side. We thought they were British Marines who had just gotten off planes and were here to replace us. They had fought their way all the way up to Hagaru-ri and done some horrendous fighting to get where they were. A British lieutenant came up to me and the only way he could tell that I was an officer was because I had binoculars around my neck. I was just as scruffy as the troops. He came up and gave me a smart British salute. He asked where we put our machine guns. We were around a fire. Doc Toppel was lying down. Just a short time before he had said he couldn't get too close to the fire because his leg was thawing and hurting like hell. Anyway the Brits came up, the lieutenant and one of his NCO's and when he asked me where he could put the machine guns Toppel said, "I don't give a fuck where you put your machine guns, just put them someplace where we can get warm." Now mind you, here he was feverish. He had been carrying a bullet in his leg for several days and he's a punchy guy anyway. Those two Brits figured I ought to have pulled out my pistol and shot him for disrespect.

Anyway, the next day, we got into Hagaru. I remember one morning we got a replacement corpsman. The gunny told him, "Just stick by me and then when you hear a guy start yelling corpsman, you go to where they're yelling corpsman." That was that guy's indoctrination because we started moving out right away.

On the 8th of December we had the point for the Division. We were down to about 30 men of our original 215 plus maybe another hundred replacements who had come to us over two campaigns. Our skipper had just been killed. There were three lieutenants left. [1st Lt. Chew-Een] Lee took over. He got hit in 20 minutes. The Chinese were up on a hill and we had to make a frontal assault on them. I was leading the assault. For awhile we had a tank but that pulled off. I had [PFC Attilio] Lupacchini with me and the two of us were forward. Lupacchini was right next to me and he went down fast. And then I got nailed. A couple of gooks popped up from behind a hill a little ways from me. One had a rifle, the other a burp gun. The guy with the rifle got me in my left side, the burp gunner got me on the right side. I went down in the snow. I have no idea how long it took for that corpsman to come up but it must have been fairly quickly.

What happened to the two Chinese who got you?

That's a great story. [ ] Morrisroe was coming up right behind me and he saw those Chinese. I think he had an M1. He shot the Chinese rifleman and then Morisrow went past me and when he got to the position where the Chinese were, somebody else got the burp gunner, perhaps [CPL Merwin] Perkins. When Morrisroe got up to where the dead Chinese rifleman

was, he saw that he was holding a new clip of .25 caliber ammo in his hand. He was about to put that in because the round he got me with was the last round in that clip and he was putting in a new clip. As he went by, Morrisroe took that fresh clip of ammo from the Chinese and saved it as a souvenir. Many years later, he gave it to me and I have it framed on my wall.

The rifleman hit you in the left shoulder and the burp-gunner got you in the right elbow.

I think I got two or three rounds from the burp gun; I'm not sure. But it blew out my elbow and most of the nerves. The pain was awful. I was also spitting blood all over the place.

After I got shot, the corpsman who got to me was a replacement who had just joined us that day. I don't know who he was. He was the only one with us who had a clear, shaven face and a clean parka. He stood out because he was so new. He didn't know what the hell was going on.

After I got hit, the fire was very heavy. Yet this kid came up about a hundred yards, under that fire, across a snowy hill to get to me. Then he threw himself down beside me. Bullets were whizzing just a few inches overhead. As he lay beside me, I yelled at him to give me some morphine and he said he couldn't. "I can't sir. It's frozen." And then I really took off at him. "Put it in your mouth and keep it liquid. Don't you boots know anything?" Then I realized this kid has come up under fire to save my life, and I'm chewing him out.

After a while the morphine melted and he gave me the jab. I'll never forget chewing him out after what he had just done. I was ashamed of myself. I'd give anything to find that lad and thank him. Of the 27 people who survived our company, not one of them knows what happened to that corpsman. He was the second one we had in 2 days. The first corpsman had been killed the previous day, and no one even knew who he was.

You said that when you were shot, you were spitting up blood. What was that all about?

Later I found out that when the bullet went in my upper left shoulder and came out my back, it knocked off part of the scapular bone. In doing so, it nicked my lung. That's why a lot of people thought I was dead when they saw me lying beside the road. The whole front of me was covered with blood. But that healed up pretty fast.

After I got shot, there was a lot of confusion about how I got down off the hill. What we did with casualties was to open up a poncho or shelter half and put the guy on it. Then we would slide him down on the snow. That saved a four-man carry. Two or three guys claimed to have taken me down and put me in a ditch.

By this time I was in and out of it with the morphine. I woke up once and there was a huge tank chuffing away. I wondered if he knew I was there. I was afraid he'd run over me.

Anyway, I was down in the ditch and coming in and out of consciousness. I had sent [CPL Robert] Kelly, my runner, back earlier to take what was left of our 60's [mortars]. He came down the road and saw me there. I guess there were a lot of casualties around. There was one of those crackerbox ambulances sitting on the road with a couple of corpsmen on it getting warm. You couldn't blame them for that. They'd been working hard that day. Kelly went up and told them he had a bad casualty down there. When the corpsmen gave him a hard time, Kelly shoved his carbine into the ambulance. That convinced them to load me aboard. The ambulance held four. I remember one guy screaming for morphine and another guy telling him

to quit his bitchin. I wanted some morphine too but the corpsman told me he couldn't give me any until we got back to the aid station.

I remember being carried into the aid station, a huge canvas affair with bright lights. People began stripping and doing things to me. I woke up a couple of time with guys moaning. The corpsmen were wearing scarves around their faces. They were all in their parkas, all wrapped up. It was cold. I remember looking up and seeing plasma and wondering if it was going to freeze.

I ended up in an Army field hospital in an old school house. When I woke up I saw high windows and then I saw this beautiful, beautiful woman only inches from my face. She looked like an Irish colleen with black hair and blue eyes. I thought I was dead and in heaven. And I thought she was an angel. My first thought was "I made it." I never thought **I** would make it to heaven. Then I wondered how my wife Dorothy would find out I was dead.

It turned out she was checking my vital signs. After that, two giant black guys carried me on a stretcher to a plane. One of them kept telling me, "You're going to be all right, man. You're going to be all right now." He said, "The Air Force takes care of you now."

So they flew me out of Korea. When I woke up it was like a nightmare. Breugel could have painted this scene. It was a big, open room like a gymnasium with cots all over the place and people moaning and screaming. I noticed that the blankets were brown, and then I heard someone yelling "Medic!" It was an Army hospital. At that time, the Army had not performed well up where we were fighting and I had little respect for them and I guess that translated into my thinking. I was indignant that I was in an Army hospital. I yelled out for a corpsman. I didn't want some medic taking care of me. I wanted a corpsman.

A medic came over, a nice kid. He was wearing khakis and the red medic's band. He told me his brother was in the Marines up at Chosin and he was worried that he hadn't heard from him. He gave me more morphine. I was living on morphine at that time. Every time I'd wake up I was in excruciating pain. The kid next to me asked me if I wanted a cigarette. I could only move my left hand so the kid held the cigarette for me.

Anyway, I was only in that Army hospital at Otsu for a day or so. And when I woke up I was being pushed into the junior officers' ward at the naval hospital in Yokosuka. That's a scene that should be captured. All the passagesways there at Yokosuka were lined with cots. There were guys sitting or smoking or walking around. Those were mainly the walking wounded. Guys badly wounded like me were in rooms in beds. It was the same in the junior officers' ward. A nurse came in. We called her "Nurse Gunny." She was some tough cookie, but I love her to this day.

Why was she called that?

Because she ran a tight ship and I'll give you a perfect example. A couple of days after I was there they brought in a casualty. He was walking wounded with his arm in a cast, and wearing all his filthy combat gear. " Nurse Gunny" said that she would put him in with us whether we liked it or not. You see, we had been alone in that room until she started filling it up with cots. And then she turned to him and said, "I want you out of that filthy gear and into something clean. I'll be back to check on you in a few minutes." Then she gave him a little glass bottle and said, "Fill this up."

As soon as she left, this guy reached into his sling and pulled out a can of beer. He opened the beer with one hand! I'll never forget it. Then he poured some of the beer into the

little urine bottle. He sat on that little cot and told us stories, every once in a while taking a few sips of beer.

Then in came "Nurse Gunny." She said, "I thought I told you to get out of those goddam filthy clothes! You do it right now!"

"Yes maam, yes m'aam." And then before she stalked out, she pointed to the urine bottle, "I'll take that." As she walked out the door, the guy says, "Wait a minute. I haven't finished that." And then he grabbed the bottle and drank it down. Two minutes later two, great big shore patrol guys took him up to the psycho ward.

When they had brought me in to the hospital there at Yokosuka, I learned that I also had frostbite. I hadn't realized that. I must have gotten it after I was wounded and lying in the ditch. Even though it was a mild case, it upset me greatly. To me, avoiding frostbite was a function of discipline. You could always hear the NCO's and junior officers yelling, "Keep your toes moving." When you're pinned down you just had to remember to keep the pieces moving. And I hadn't done that after I got wounded. I do remember waking up with that tank over my head and remembering to wiggle my toes. I had the thought, "Jeez, an officer getting frostbite." We didn't think much of that. Every night when we went into our perimeter, I went to every man, had him take off his boots--those awful shoe-pacs--take his socks off and put on a clean pair. I did that and still lost men to frostbite. But if the truth be known, some guys let themselves get frostbite as a way out. Bill Davis tells a great story about a guy coming up to him and saying, "Isn't there a way I can get an easy wound to get out of here?" Doc says, "Can you get hold of a .45?" The guy says, "I probably could." So Bill says, "Here's what you do. Make sure nobody's around. Take the .45, put it next to your head, and pull the trigger."

The day after I got to Yokosuka Japanese orderlies took me through innumerable passageways into an examining room. I was just coming out of a haze and saw three Navy doctors. They were looking at a light board with x-rays on it. I heard them say, "We can't do anything with this arm." Then a big Navy captain said, "Gentlemen, I guess the only thing we can do is amputate." And I thought, "Some poor bastard is going to get something amputated. I lifted my head up a little bit to see what poor bastard was going to have something cut off. And then I realized that I was alone. Suddenly it dawned that they were talking about me! When I heard him say "amputate," I sat up as far as I could and said, "Fuck you! You're not amputatin anything off me." As you know, you don't say that to a Navy captain. He came over and said, "Lieutenant, you just have to face facts and realize that there's not much we can do."

I said, "I've got to get back to my troops. I can't get back to my troops if I don't have an arm." Getting back to my troops was always in my head. He patted me a few times and then turned to the other two doctors and said, "Gentlemen, with this kind of spirit, let's see what happens. We've got enough work here. If they want to take it off back in the states . . . Let's see if they'll work with him." So they all nodded their heads and that's why they didn't cut my arm off.

What got him was what I said about getting back to my troops. That was just as sincere as any thought I've ever had in my life. All I could think of was, "They need me." And I couldn't go back if I didn't have my arm.

I remember some time after that, a doctor came in to check my arm. They had me in a half cast by that time. It was awful; I couldn't even look at it. I asked what he thought. He says, "I'm not the guy you should ask. I'm only here to get it cleaned up and make sure you don't have any infection spreading." I said, "Well, tell me what's going to happen? When are we gonna start getting this thing going?"

He says, “You want to talk to a nerve man or a bone doctor.”

“But I’m talking to you.”

He says, “This isn’t my line.”

I says, “What’s your line?”

He says, “I’m a pediatrician.”

“What the hell are you doing here?”

He says, “That’s what I’d like to know.”

Probably a couple of weeks before he was taking care of little babies. Now he was taking care of big babies. He was one of the few people I ran into in that whole hospital that didn’t seem to put himself out for you. He was feeling sorry for himself. It seems that some of those doctors had been yanked right out of wherever they were.

I also remember being in an examining room with a little fly buzzing around. This seemed strange. A little while later, I saw another one land on my hand. I didn’t feel it, just saw it. And then I saw another one coming out of my cast but at first didn’t think much about it. Then a corpsman came in and I said, “Do you know we have flies around here? They’re all over the place. I even saw one crawling out of my cast.” And he said, “Sure, that’s because the maggots are hatching.”

Another doctor came in and unwrapped it. He said, “Those maggots are good for you. They’re eating up all the infection in there.” But it sickened me. I couldn’t look at my arm after that.

Maggots have a beneficial effect by eating necrotic tissue.

He said it was a good sign.

What exactly was the nature of your wounds? What did the doctors call it?

I had a severed ulnar nerve. The doctors in the x-ray room said it looked to them like a bombed out railroad yard with the tracks all shot up.

After that, the nurses and corpsmen encouraged me to eat and do things. The nurses were so kind. The walking wounded wanted to get back to Korea. Most of us were regulars. The problem the nurses and doctors had there was trying to keep these guys subdued because all they wanted to do was get back on the line. Somebody figured out that if you screwed up, they’d send you back.

The passageways were dark and filled with cots. A couple of lieutenants came in one night and instead of turning on the lights, someone yelled, “Illumination!” Illumination was what we called for when the enemy was trying to sneak up on us. Well, the whole ward went nuts. There was stuff like that happening all the time. You can imagine what those nurses had to go through to run that ward. But we knew those ladies were really working to help us get better. They were tough but beautiful.

When I left Yokosuka, I went out on a gurney and they stopped me at the nurses’ station. “Nurse Gunny” came out, held my hand and kissed me. And they were all like that. They were beautiful to us. And the corpsmen. I had problems with some of them back in the states but those corpsmen at Yokosuka were great.

Where did you go after Yokosuka?

They took me to an Air Force Base to fly me out and while we were waiting for the plane . . . It seemed like there were a hundred guys around. I was hurtin awful. A medic came through and I said, "What do I have to do to get a shot?"

"The nurse will get to you when she can."

"Well, what the hell is she doing?" I asked.

And he said, "We take a hundred or so of you guys through here every day and every one of you is bitchin and she's on her second watch already." He really put it to me and I had it coming because I was only thinking of myself. But just think what those ladies were going through. We were like a pipeline and they were very short-handed out there. I think they were running double watches at Yokosuka too. I remember overhearing staff saying, "How can we keep on going? We had better be careful we don't get exhausted, we're liable to make mistakes." And I heard the same thing on the evacuation planes.

It was hell on those planes. They put us in little blue compartments and the first time I woke up I didn't know where I was. I had a lot of paranoia for quite a while. The medic on that flight was a nasty bastard. He was probably his third day in a row working and he gave me a shot that didn't work. And here was paranoia working on me again. I was thinking he probably saved it for himself. Yea, he's saving it to sell. And I started thinking that the Air Force has got something against Marines. All these were insane thoughts but they seemed very real at the time.

We got to the Army hospital at Tripler and that was like paradise. It was a beautiful place. By this time I was half-casted. I think by the time I got to Oak Knoll, they had taken the penicillin drip away because that was always with me. It had seemed like it was a third limb. There was nothing medically significant at Tripler except they were so good to us. They kept bringing us fruit, flowers. The windows were open and I could look out over the ocean.

Didn't you end up at St. Albans?

Yes. I believe a CAPT James, who I think was a neurosurgeon, came into my room and gave me an extensive examination with the pins prodding and I couldn't feel anything. He could have been jumping up and down on my arm for all I knew. It had no feeling whatsoever. He told me that I would have to learn to do things with my left hand and start adjusting to a new way of doing things. At that time, I thought I would be going back to duty. I just knew something was going to bring this arm back.

A few days later there was a flag inspection and the admiral came in with a huge staff and CAPT James. I happened to be sitting on my sack at that time writing a letter. CAPT James pointed that out to the admiral. "Just look at the spirit of these Marines. I just talked to him the other day about learning how to do things with his other hand." And the admiral said, "Do you mind if I take a look at what you're writing, lieutenant?" So he saw my handwriting and said, "You're off to a very good start." I didn't have the heart to tell him I was left-handed, and he never found out.

I remember the orthopedic surgeon. His name was [LCDR Leonard P.] Jahnke. He was a great big tough SOB but a great guy. I was standing up at the nurses' station one day and he came in. The nurse said, "LT Owen has some sort of an inflamation on his back." He had me take off my pajama top and turned me around. The next thing I know there was this excruciating pain. He had just squeezed out a fragment of a bullet. He took out a nice little piece like that and said, "I could start a collection from you guys." He was tough. He insisted that I keep working. They never let up on me.

My arm never came back so I could go to full duty, or go to duty at all. When I finally realized I was going to have an arm that would not function, I was prepared for it and didn't whine or wonder how I was going to live with a disability when I got out.

That Miss Kudeson was something. She would tell me that if I wanted to go out or do anything at all, I had to tie my own shoes. And what a challenge that was! I had to do it one-handed. I can't do it now. But I did learn to take a pack of matches and light a match one-handed. These were the little things you learned.

I'd get terribly frustrated learning to cut meat and had the corpsman do it for me. And that was terrible having to have someone do that for me. For a long time afterward, I didn't go to restaurants because I'd have to ask the waiter have my meat cut.

I was in the hospital a year and half and, by the time I got out, I was acclimated to what I had. Maybe too, there were guys a lot worse than I was. There were amputees and stuff like that. Nobody sat around saying "I feel sorry for you," or "You've got it tough." There was no quarter given. That was the great thing about it.

Later on, the reserves started coming into the hospital from later campaigns in Korea. That would have been after the spring of '51. Whereas the regulars were hoping to get back to their troops, these guys wanted to get out and get back to work. You think of what those guys went through. There was one lieutenant who had his arm amputated--a reservist. He said, "What the hell did I do? I was started a business and everything was going great. Here, a year later, my business is gone and my arm is gone." That is the only guy I saw who was really bitter. And yet there was room for a lot more bitterness than that.

While I was at St. Albans, they let my wife take me into New York City. We were sitting at the ice skating rink at Rockefeller Plaza having a cup of coffee at a table. She got up to go to the ladies' room and while she was gone, I suddenly became terrified. I covered myself up. She got me back to the hospital and I told the nurse about it. She then sent me down to see the psychiatrist. I think his name was Dr. Goldberg. He told me this was common. If the feelings came and went it was okay but if they persisted over time I should worry.

I also remember the occupational therapy was pure dread. Those women must have gone through some kind of course in sadism. But they were pulling it out of us. They made me do stuff that . . . This is how I got as much movement into my hand as I did. About 2 or 3 months after I got to St. Albans, the feeling started to come back.

While I was there I had a series of operations--exploratories and patching the bones together, and fixing the nerves. They took us into Columbia Presbyterian Hospital too. One of the leading hand specialists in the world, a Dr. Carroll, did a lot of work on me. After I was surveyed out of the Marine Corps, I kept exercising and, a couple of years later, my arm started to improve drastically. They had put me on a regimen of constant exercise when I was in the hospital and that stayed with me. I always carried a little rubber ball around and squeezed it. I began to get feeling in my hand and noticed I could make some movements.

I was in New York on business once--about 1954-- and went to the Naval Hospital and asked them to take a look. I went back in for two operations and there was a drastic improvement in my hand. Now you can see I have a pretty good hand! It became a challenge for me to do things and I give the credit to those people who never, ever gave me the soft treatment. I think they sensed that a guy like me needed tough treatment. When I think of my time in naval hospitals I think of how fortunate I was. As long as I had to get shot, thank God I had the naval hospitals to take care of me.